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Abstraction in St. Thomas

JOHN L. MCKENZIE
Saint Louis University

THE metaphysics of St. Thomas form a closely woven system of ideas. Once the fundamental principles of being are posited, as St. Thomas understands them, the whole concatenation of his theory follows with irresistible necessity. His system is not an aggregation of discrete units of experience assembled to form a verisimilitude; it is a logical deduction from a few irrefragable principles. Controversial ink has flowed in torrents as to whether St. Thomas has balanced the pyramid of his philosophy upon its base or upon its apex; but whatever may be said about the validity of his conclusions, it is at least evident to the impartial observer that his system has the virtue of unity—unity so close that, if one rejects any integral portion of the whole system, one can hardly retain the fundamental principles on which the system is based.

In no respect is the unity of his system more compelling than in his theory of intellectual cognition. Père Sertillanges, undoubtedly one of the greatest modern interpreters of St. Thomas, goes so far as to say that St. Thomas' *kenntnistheorie* is the principle of his metaphysics rather than a consequence.¹ It is certain that St. Thomas' theory of cognition is so closely interlocked with his metaphysics that it is scarcely intelligible without it; and here indeed we find the *initia dolorum*.

Interpretations of St. Thomas' theory of cognition tend, therefore, to do not keep cautiously to the middle of the road, but to swing to two extremes: one interpretation preserves the shell of St. Thomas' theory without the foundation of his meta-

physics to give it body; the other attempts to out-Angelicate the Angelic Doctor himself. The first really does not succeed in uniting the intellect to its object at all; the second is far too successful. If the theory of cognition proposed by St. Thomas is the most effective answer both to idealism and to materialism—and such is by far the prevailing view among modern interpreters—then it is worth while to study it without distortion; and it seems beyond doubt that the first step in finding out what St. Thomas meant is to find out what St. Thomas said. I should apologize for such a banal remark, were it not that so many discussions on what St. Thomas meant have been carried on with a naive indifference to the text.

The key to St. Thomas' theory of cognition is the abstraction of the *species intelligibilis* from the phantasm; but in very truth it seems difficult to find the lock. The first of the two extreme interpretations abandons abstraction without further ado. Abstraction, we are told, is but a metaphor; the intellect as a spiritual faculty can take nothing from a material object. The second extreme embraces abstraction with all its heart, and speaks eloquently of a certain mystic spiritual union of intellect and object. As to the first extreme, it is evident that St. Thomas denies that the intellect takes anything from the entity of the object, and it is also evident that for him abstraction is a very real and a very important process; hence we should, obviously, look for another meaning of the term. The second extreme reads far more into St. Thomas than

his treatment as a whole will allow; elevating as such mystic intuition may appear, it simply does not fit the cold prosaic conclusions of St. Thomas.

St. Thomas thus defines abstraction: "*Cognoscere id quod est in materia individuali, non prout est in tali materia, est abstrahere formam a materia individuali, quam repraesentant phantasmata.*"² His definition is made more precise in the same passage: Abstraction, he says, is of two kinds: one through composition and division, "*sicut cum intelligimus aliquid non esse in alio*"; such abstraction may be true or false. The second is "*per modum simplicitatis, sicut cum intelligimus unum, nihil considerando de alio . . . similiter dico quod ea quae pertinent ad rationem speciei cujuslibet rei materialis possunt considerari sine principiis individualibus, quae non sunt de ratione speciei. Et hoc est abstrahere universale a particulari, vel speciem intelligibilem a phantasmatibus, considerare scilicet naturam speciei absque consideratione individualium principiorum, quae per phantasmata repraesentantur.*"³ Let us see what this text involves.

In the first place, we may inquire how the object of cognition is presented to the intellect. The scope of the intellect is coextensive with being as such—all existing reality: "*Intellectus respicit suum objectum secundum communem rationem entis, eo quod intellectus possibilis est quo est omnia fieri.*"⁴ The human intellect, however, as it is conditioned in this life, cannot directly apprehend the whole extent of being; directly it cognizes the nature of corporeal objects as its proper object, and from the primitive ideas of these it derives all its cognition. "*Intellectus autem humani, qui est conjunctum corpori, proprium objectum est quidditas sive natura in materia corporali existens; et per hujusmodi naturas visibilium rerum, etiam in invisibilium rerum aliqualem cognitionem ascendit.*"⁵ The object to be cognized is presented to the intellect by the phantasm, which St. Thomas defines as "*quidam motus causatus a sensu secundum actum*"⁶—a definition taken bodily from Aristotle.⁷ The phantasm is a sensible representation of an individual object through its sensible qualities. As a sensible representation, however, it is not a sufficient cause of intellection: "*Nihil corporeum potest imprimere in rem incorpoream.*"⁸ The reason for this we must examine.

It is a fundamental thesis of St. Thomas' metaphysics that the form of an object, as an act, determines the essence of the object to be what it is; as such, it is a principle of perfection, an act,⁹ and cannot be of itself limited. A principle of perfection cannot be of itself the principle of limitation and multiplication, which are imperfections; hence form must be limited and multiplied in virtue of a limited capacity in which it is received; this is the potency of matter.¹⁰ Now a material object composed of matter and form is not, as St. Thomas puts it, "*intelligibilis in actu*;" and the reason for this lies in the nature both of matter and of the intellect itself.¹¹ As a spiritual faculty the intellect must cognize objects spiritually; "*quidquid*

recipitur, recipitur per modum recipientis." And yet we are faced with the paradox that the spiritual faculty of man has as its proper object the "*quidditates rerum sensibilium*;" its work is to cognize "what" this material object is. What is the intellect to do to the sensible similitude of the object represented by the phantasm in order to render it "*intelligibilis in actu*"?

Recall again the composition of the object from matter and form—two really distinct principles. The intellect, we say, must cognize the object spiritually; yet there is nothing spiritual in the object to be cognized. The phantasm of itself cannot inform the intellect; but the intellect, as a nobler faculty, can and *de facto* must operate on the phantasm in some way; but it cannot grasp the object intentionally in the same way as the object exists in reality. It must in some way separate it, so to speak, from its matter, and yet apprehend it as the object which it is. Obviously, it must do this in some way through the form of the object, which is not matter, but the form of a material object. The form, we repeat, is an individual form only because of the matter which it actuates; it can be considered merely as form, without reference to its material conditions. In this way, the essence is apprehended through the form, which determines the essence; the object is apprehended as a "*quid*," though not as a "*hoc aliquid*." We cognize adequately what the object is, without cognizing every individual note. There seems to be no other way to apprehend a material object immaterially.¹² It is obvious, of course, that such an immaterial apprehension of the object means nothing unless we bear in mind the real distinction of the two principles of matter and form which make it possible.

In no other way, then, can the object be apprehended except immaterially; and since the object remains material and unchanged by the faculty, since the phantasm never becomes any more than a sensible representation of the object, we must place the immateriality in the active virtue of the intellect operating upon the phantasm.

"*Quia Aristoteles non posuit formas rerum naturalium subsistere sine materia (formae autem in materia existentes non sunt intelligibiles actu) sequebatur quod naturae seu formae rerum, quas intelligimus, non essent intelligibiles actu. Nihil autem reducitur de potentia in actum nisi per aliquod ens actu, sicut sensus fit in actu per sensible in actu. Oportet igitur ponere aliquam virtutem ex parte intellectus, quae facit intelligibilia in actu per abstractionem specierum a conditionibus materialibus: et haec est necessitas ponendi intellectum agentem.*"¹³

The object to be known does not exist in the manner in which we must know it. Our cognition is not intuitive; hence the intellect, in a sense, must make its object.¹⁴

The problem, then, has two phases: the first, how the object is received by the intellect; the second, how the intellect renders the object capable of being received. The first is solved by positing the *intellectus possibilis*, which by receiving the *species intelligibilis in actu* accomplishes the act of intellection; the second, by positing the *intel-*

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Scholasticism Today

SOME fifty-four years ago Leo XIII issued his encyclical *Aeterni Patris*; forty splendid years have passed since the foundation of the Institute of Philosophy at Louvain, and yet it is still possible for histories of philosophy and introductions to philosophy to treat with disdain or overlook entirely both modern and medieval Scholasticism. The recent *Introduction to Philosophy* by Professor Donald R. Major of Indiana University, a book in which Scholasticism is almost completely ignored, is a case in point. He is by no means a solitary example. Those who follow the philosophical periodicals of the United States know what recognition and what part Scholastic philosophy has in them. In histories and outlines we are only too accustomed to find it misunderstood and misinterpreted, its contributions not even mentioned, its conjunction with theology adduced as its final condemnation.

Yet, considering the facts, one finds such a condition almost unbelievable. It is true that Scholasticism has its sins; it is true that many of its textbooks show slight signs of philosophical thinking, that its adherents are not all men of genius or, even, balanced judgment. It is true that the brilliance of its medieval career was extinguished in formalism and stupid opposition to new ideas. But are not these things the inevitable concomitants of any large intellectual movement? Does not science itself number among its followers mediocre men attracted more by the blare of trumpets than the intrinsic worth of science? Are there not hundreds of foolish books that write "Sci-

ence" on their title pages? Has not antiquated theorizing resisted, throughout the history of science, the great innovations of its own geniuses? And shall we therefore condemn science? No, on such grounds neither science nor Scholastic philosophy; the *intrinsic* worth or worthlessness is the thing the true scholar must judge by. Intrinsic worth Scholasticism most certainly has.

We above divided Scholasticism into medieval and modern. Following the same division we can distinguish two reasons why no student of philosophy may ignore Scholasticism. The first of these is its historical importance. It has long been the fashion in histories of philosophy to touch Plotinus and possibly Augustine and then to pass, with a bare mention of the Schoolmen, to Descartes and the true dawn of modern thought. This would simply be amazing did we not know that it is due to a false tradition that has been accepted—surprisingly enough—without examination. We say "surprisingly enough," for it seems hardly logical not to examine most carefully a phenomenon so extraordinary as this. Is it a common thing in history to find such utter lack of continuity? Does it not offend the historical sense to believe that Descartes can really have emerged full-panoplied, as it were, from the utter blankness of the Middle Ages?

However, we know that this view of the history of philosophy has no foundation. Medieval thought, because of its original contribution and its essential part in the development of philosophy, imperiously demands place in the history of systems. For the great medieval Scholasticism was not an ignorant acceptance of Greek philosophy and science half-understood. It was not a mixture of superstition, theology, bad physics and Arabian mysticism. It was a distinct and original development: a *development*, because, like every advance in knowledge, it built on its inherited materials; *original*, because in every department of philosophy there were new contributions as, for example, in the deepening of the philosophy of *ens*, of *actus* and *potentia*, in the concept of *natura*, in the new orientation of ethics and in the metaphysics of the will. We believe that the splendid work of Etienne Gilson, as in his *Gifford Lectures*, has placed these points beyond cavil and upset definitively the old Renaissance prejudice and the tradition of a decadent Scholasticism.

Moreover, because Scholasticism connects, in positive and active development, the Greek mind with the modern mind, the history of philosophy is unintelligible without close study of the problems and solutions posited by the medieval thinkers. Descartes and Leibnitz and Kant, indeed the whole tone and the preoccupations of this era, can be understood only in the light of the Middle Ages. Kant's problems in ethics, for example, cannot be grasped, as M. Gilson points out, unless we remember that they arise from the unconscious retention of medieval doctrines without the metaphysical principles on which they were based.

But it is not only as a body of great historical systems that Scholasticism merits study. Of all past philosophies

it is the most perennial; its splendid congruity with common sense, its rationalization of man's highest desires and impulses, its satisfactory positing of the Absolute without the confusion of Pantheism or the heart-breaking separation of Deism—all these make it the permanent philosophy of man. The method of Scholasticism, a method that traces its origin to the Socratic Circle, is so effective and positive that a system of philosophical instruments equally effective is not only unknown but almost inconceivable to the true modern, for he is accustomed to a confusion of tongues, a romantic philosophy wary of definition but wealthy in image and figure. A study of the mere form of Scholasticism would be a worthwhile mental discipline in itself. Its body of teaching, however, the fruit of that method working on the heritage of Greece and the Christian centuries, is its true claim to study and recognition. This claim we can only point out here; to appreciate Scholastic philosophy one must study it in its masters.

Moreover, we are witnessing today a revival of that philosophy which has developed into a movement of world wide proportions. In Europe, its influence is everywhere felt, in the universities of Germany and England as well as in its ancestral seats in the Latin countries. We cannot consider the stream of studies and monographs that is issuing from the presses of Europe without amazement at the fecundity of a system of thought long pronounced dead. Jacques Maritain, Etienne Gilson, Père Maréchal, Charles Boyer, Erich Przywara, Alexander Willwoll, Garrigou-Lagrange and dozens of others stand out as worthy protagonists of the long tradition of the Schoolmen. Merely to mention the outstanding books of the last fifteen years would require a long bibliography. It is indeed inconceivable that anyone could call stagnant a philosophy producing work of the calibre of *L'Intellectualisme de St. Thomas*, *L'Esprit de la Philosophie Médiévale*, *Le Point de Départ de la Métaphysique* and A.-D. Sertillanges' *S. Thomas D'Aquin*.

Yet, in the United States, outside of a few centers of learning and except for a courageous professor here and there, this philosophy is, to all appearances, unknown or disdainfully pronounced worthless.

Recent writers in the *Commonweal* have asked how we can remedy this situation and bring home to these men the value of this "sanest of human systems." If we are to approach this problem intelligently we must remember what is the temper of the professional scholar in these days. For the modern scholar has several unique characteristics, the outgrowth of democratic education, of the printing press and of the long "tyranny" of scientific method. There are "idols" of the lecture hall which we must take into consideration.

Whatever disclaimers may be made, it remains that the printed page has hypnotized the world of intellect. Scholars rely so much on reference and authority that they who once fulminated against "authoritarianism" have come to see things not as they are in themselves but as they are in books. This attitude G. K. Chesterton has

well described in the contemporaries of Cobbett, who, with the ruined abbeys and the ancient cathedrals before their eyes, could, through the force of a tradition, deny culture to their forefathers of the Catholic Ages. It is a great gift to see—independently.

Now, the modern written tradition in English lands—and even elsewhere—is solid against Scholasticism; in literature and history the decadence of Scholasticism is painted as its apex of achievement; its phrases and doctrines are misapplied and misinterpreted; its name is a name of reproach and a synonym for formalism and pedantry. This tradition embodied in textbooks and reference works will blind the students for many a coming generation. For the book with its learned apparatus and its show of authority has, for many, more convincing power than the *thing* itself.

This, then, is the particular "idol" of the modern intellectual worker—scholarship. We do not say it must always be interpreted to mean merely the appurtenances of scholarship nor that it is a worship without redeeming features. But we point it out as the necessary "open sesame" to our universities and the circle of American thinkers. For even genius, if not supported by quotations and all the paraphernalia of the scientific world, will find entrance hard to the learned world now-a-days.

Practically, then, we must equip ourselves with a scholarly knowledge of the history of philosophy, of non-Scholastic systems, historical and contemporary. We must really understand the viewpoint of contemporary philosophers; we must offer our solutions in language they can understand; we must write for their journals and according to their method (how often do we find Scholastics contributing to the American journals of philosophy?); our books must be irreproachable in scholarship and understanding. Perhaps in the past we have been too neglectful of this "idol" of scholarship. However, a constant activity in careful writing and careful lecturing and careful teaching will gradually break down the indifference which now shuts Scholasticism out of books and lecture halls. Genuine thought, if proposed and re-proposed, if propagated with conviction and enthusiasm, if backed by resources of solid learning, cannot permanently be ignored. The work before Scholasticism in America is large indeed. Scholars of rare attainment and writers of distinction are—in the full sense of the phrase—the need of the hour.

Besides, science, art and letters need, urgently, the sanity of Scholasticism; the confusion of thought reflected in confusion of language is growing. One need only read a few chapters of a book such as Richard Rothschild's *Reality and Illusion*—or the last chapters of Professor Haldane's *Mechanism, Life and Personality*—to realize that modern thinkers have almost forgotten the science of definition and distinction, that in philosophy they are almost pre-Socratic and may soon need a new genius like Socrates to make them masters again of their mental equipment.

The Morality of the Holding Companies

A Professor Emeritus of Ethics

NOBODY who has any knowledge of the causes which have produced the depression under which our country has been suffering for the last four years can deny that the practices of many holding companies are not the least of these causes. Judge Evan A. Evans, in a decision handed down in the District Court of the United States for the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, on December 22, 1933, inserted the following severe condemnation:

"Neither the genus, the holding company, nor the species, the investment trust, can find justification for legal existence. Their unfortunate presence in our midst is due to the desire of states to secure revenue, and the race of the states has been one of laxity and not one of diligence."

The voices condemning the holding company are increasing in loudness and number; but they are countered by equally strong declarations in its defense. What is the truth?

Let us first explain two definitions of the holding company proposed by authorities in law and economics.

Mr. John T. Flynn in his *Investment Trusts Gone Wrong* gives a rather lengthy description which we can boil down to the following sentence: "A holding company is an organization for profit which either by mere consent of the members composing it or by a legal charter empowered to hold stocks in other corporations and holds these stocks for the purpose of controlling these corporations." Professors Bonbright and Means of Columbia University agree in substance with this definition when they say that "a holding company is any company incorporated or unincorporated which is in a position to control, or materially to influence, the management of one or more other companies by virtue, in part at least, of its ownership of securities in the other company or companies." We do not mention other definitions, which being incomplete, are applicable to business organizations that are far from being holding companies, or add an element either necessary nor common to all holding companies, e.g., the definition given in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. The following elements are necessary for a holding company in the strict sense as distinct from other business organizations. First of all, it is an organization distinct from the companies over which it has control and from which it secures profits. Hence if a certain number of shareholders of one and the same company pool their shares for the purpose of dictating the policy and controlling the management of that company, this group would not be a holding company. A holding company aims at participating in the gains of other organizations. Secondly, as such, it does not produce or distribute economic wealth or public utilities; these functions it leaves to the companies over which it has control. It is true that banks and other corporations may include in their activities those of a holding company, as was the case in the defunct Guardian

Detroit Union Group, which did most of the banking business in the city of Detroit. But this is not necessary. Thirdly, it need not, and for the purposes of evading the Sherman Anti-Trust Law, it does not extinguish the corporations put under its control, nor form them all into a new unified company, acquiring all their physical property and assets and assuming all their liabilities, as is done in the outlawed trusts. The corporations retain their individuality and operate as separate entities. As Professor Bonbright says,

"Holding companies themselves do not have direct ownership or engage in direct operation of physical properties. Holding companies own securities, mostly common voting stock, of the corporation which own and operate physical property." Fourthly and lastly, to quote the same author again, "the aim of the holding company can be sharply distinguished from the aim of the ordinary corporation. Its aim is to control policy and men as against the ordinary corporate aim of making or selling a commodity or service."

Let us notice here that it would be wrong to imagine that the "subsidiaries," i. e., the companies controlled by a holding company, are always corporations which make and sell commodities or service ("operating companies"). We find also super-holding companies among whose subsidiaries are other holding companies, and super-super-holding companies, built on super-holding companies. In fact this process of "pyramiding," of building holding companies on top of others, has been continued in one case at least until one giant holding company controlled four out of every five dollars of an entire state of the Union.

If next we ask what the ostensible purposes of the holding company are, Bonbright enumerates these four:

- 1) To combine two or more hitherto independent companies under a centralized management and control.
- 2) To combine two or more companies not only under a centralized control, but also under a unified financial structure.
- 3) To re-capitalize the financial structure of one or more enterprises through the substitution of the securities of the holding company for the securities of the subsidiary companies. (But in order to do so the holding company must have a charter from a state, since only chartered companies can issue securities.)
- 4) To pyramid the voting control so as to give the organizers of the holding company control over the subsidiaries with the minimum amount of investment.

These purposes are not mutually exclusive; often all four of them are exemplified in a single holding company. Of course, behind these tangible purposes others may and often are concealed, which the holding company wishes to obtain by means of these four.

We consider only the holding company as it exists in

this country; it would take us too far afield to speak about those of other countries.

Addressing ourselves now to the task of determining the morality of the holding company we must first of all lay down the principles according to which we must settle the question. Most of them are found in the encyclical of His Holiness Pius XI, "*Quadragesimo Anno*," and it will be profitable to use his own words as much as possible. His Holiness says:

"The right to own private property has been given man by nature, or rather by the Creator Himself, not only in order that individuals may be able to provide for their own needs and those of their families, but also that *by means of it the goods which the Creator has destined for the human race may serve their (twofold) purpose.*"

"It follows from the twofold character of ownership (namely, as a means to secure not only the private but also the common welfare) that men must take into account not only their own advantage, but also the common good."

"To define in detail these duties (namely of promoting by private property the individual and social welfare and of avoiding what is contrary to it), when need occurs and when the natural law does not do so, is the function of Government. Provided that the natural and divine law be observed, the public authority, in view of the common good, may specify more accurately what is licit and what is illicit for property owners in the use of their possessions. The defining of private possessions (what individuals and societies or corporations may own and use, how they may acquire ownership, and the rest) has been left by God to man's own industry and to the laws of the individual peoples."

Speaking of the evils which must be remedied, the Pope says:

"It is patent that in our days not only is wealth accumulated, but immense power and despotic economic domination is concentrated in the hands of a few, and that those few are frequently not the owners, but the trustees and directors of invested funds, who administer them at their own good pleasure."

"This power becomes particularly irresistible when exercised by those who, because they hold and control money, are able also to govern credit and determine its allotment, for that reason supplying, so to speak, the life-blood to the entire economic body, and grasping, as it were, in their hands the very soul of production, so that no one dare breathe against their will."

"This concentration of power has led to a threefold struggle for domination. First, there is the struggle for dictatorship in the economic sphere itself; then the fierce battle to acquire control of the State, so that its resources and authority may be abused in the economic struggle; finally the clash between the States themselves."

"The State, which should be supreme arbiter . . . intent upon justice and the common good, has become a slave, bound to the service of human greed and passion."

Among the objects which must be striven after with all care and energy His Holiness mentions these: "Every effort must be made that at least in future *only a just share of the fruits of production be permitted to accumulate in the hands of the wealthy.*"

Moreover, the Pope wants that "free competition which within certain limits is just and productive of good results," but not that *laissez faire* policy which "gives

free rein to dangerous individualistic ideals." He condemns the "economic supremacy which within recent times has taken the place of free competition," "is a headstrong and vehement power," "needs to be curbed strongly and ruled with prudence," and "controlled sternly and uncompromisingly."

From all that has been said so far it follows that it is the bounden duty of the government to pass and to execute energetically laws which prevent flagrant violations of individual and social justice and charity in the economic sphere, and likewise to enact other laws which prescribe certain ways in which economic justice and charity must be practiced, if the common good is not to suffer serious harm, or society is not to be deprived of very important blessings.

In particular, the State has the right and at times the duty to forbid actions, arrangements, societies which in themselves are not morally wrong, but contain a special danger of abuse. Thus it may forbid savings banks to invest their funds in certain ventures, or persons to organize societies which may lead to harmful monopolies, or command that certain drugs or other chemicals be sold only with labels stating all the elements of their composition.

The laws thus passed bind in conscience, for they are but determinations of the duty which every citizen has of co-operating for the common welfare; and according to sound ethics the civil authority is empowered and obliged by the Creator to specify this duty of the citizen. Moreover, the studious evasion of the law and the intentional frustration of the object which the law intends to attain in the matter of individual and social justice by such means as a recourse to mere technicalities is morally wrong. Legal innocence and moral innocence are not the same.

In order to judge the morality of any society we must consider the end for which it is instituted, the means which according to its constitution it is to employ to attain this end, the moral dangers which necessarily accompany the means chosen, and the safeguards which it must use to avoid these dangers. For we define a society as the moral and constant union of individuals or groups bound to pursue a common end in a certain more or less definite manner. The right to form societies for lawful ends which are to be attained by lawful means is given man by the Creator Who made him a social being, that is to say, a being apt, inclined, and in a way necessitated to live and work with his fellows for his own and their benefit.

Therefore, the first element to be considered in deciding the morality of the holding company is its end, which according to the definitions given before, consists in acquiring and exercising a material influence, if possible, a perfect control of other companies. This control and influence is not morally wrong as long as it does not violate justice and charity, above all as long as it does not develop into that "domination" mentioned above. Nay, such an influence may be a real benefit, as we shall see more in detail when we examine the four specific purposes

which we mentioned at the beginning. Of course, it is presupposed that the holding company is run by men who are severely honest, socially minded, and fully competent. To deny that such men can be found in this country would mean that we must despair of our fellow citizens and that the United States are intellectually and morally bankrupt. Men who are well grounded in sound ethics and sound economics have assured the writer of the existence of really good and unobjectionable holding companies. It is these men who are urging the passage by the state legislatures and by Congress of laws which will drive the corrupt companies out of existence and force the holding companies throughout the Union to do business according to correct ethics and economics.

Let us now consider the four purposes for which, according to Bonbright, holding companies are formed. The idea of the holding company began to be exploited in this country when the Sherman Anti-Trust law forced the dissolution of the large companies which had been formed by a merger of smaller concerns. The holding company, though lacking some of the advantages the "trusts" secured, adds others which the trusts did not offer. Though in the eyes of the general public it is practically identical with the trusts, it is not so in the eyes of the law. For according to American jurisprudence a company which holds only a stock interest in an operating concern, a railroad, a utility or industrial corporation, a bank, is "not affected with a public interest" and, therefore, not subject to the Sherman Anti-Trust law. According to the argumentation of the corporation lawyers the trusts fell under the ban of that law because they entered the field of production, merged companies, deprived them of their corporate existence and directly assumed their work, while the holding company leaves them intact, lets them continue their work, and assumes only functions which do not directly produce the goods and services which the public desires.

It is true that many holding companies are not "pure" holding companies, but also "operate," that is to say, besides the four functions of exercising a central and unified control and direction, financing their subsidiaries, capitalizing them, and pyramiding the voting control, these holding companies engage also in production, banking, etc. Companies which do this, are called "parent companies." Thus the Pennsylvania Railroad Company is a parent company, operating its own lines and the lines of other companies whose physical property has been leased to it, while the so-called New York Central System is a pure holding company; such was also the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey.

Bearing these things in mind we take up the question of the morality of the first purpose of the holding company, namely, central and unified control and direction. This control may be exercised over concerns of the same kind; over concerns which engage in the different stages of producing certain articles or in producing articles for which the waste and residue of other articles are needed;

and over concerns which deal in altogether different lines of business. The first combination is called horizontal, for example, the combination of railroads, of banks, of telegraph and telephone companies, of oil producing concerns. The second is called a vertical combination, such as that of corporations which engage in the different processes of the iron and steel industry: blast furnaces, rolling mills, tube-works, locomotive works, works producing other machinery. The third is called the circular combination, such as a combination of meat-packing and fruit-canning, or, to give an example of a holding company of this kind, an arrangement in virtue of which the holding company through its possession of the majority of the voting stock and through other means controls mining, transportation, power, and banking concerns.

Now it cannot be denied that the centralized control and direction of hitherto independent concerns which are brought together in a horizontal or vertical combination can be beneficial to the general public as well as to the corporations. It can secure for the corporations a useful co-operation, harmonizing their individual activities, buying for them the raw material which they need at lower prices through larger orders, preventing cut-throat competition, dividing orders for business among the corporations of the same class according to a just distribution, rendering "high power" advertising unnecessary, securing for similar concerns first class expert advisers and managers for whose services the individual companies could not pay without increasing their overhead expenses too much and thus either materially reducing the lawful profit of their shareholders or unduly screwing up the prices for the public. The saving thus effected will benefit all.

Moreover, it may happen, for instance, that two railroads ought to co-operate and reciprocate for the benefit of the public as well as their own. A mere "gentlemen's agreement" is hardly effective enough, an outright merger is not only justly forbidden by the Sherman-Clayton law but could be positively detrimental for the stockholders of one of the roads. The author has in mind the actual case of two railroads which ought to be and are united by means of a holding company. But the larger of the two does not do as lucrative a business as the smaller, which is hardly more than a coal-carrier, but very favorably situated. If the roads were simply merged their profits would have to be pooled and the fewer shareholders of the smaller road would have to divide the amount by which the dividend of their concern surpasses that of the greater with the more numerous shareholders of the latter.

The objections which can be raised against the holding company on the score of unjust centralized control and direction are numerous enough. Bonbright, Flynn, and Harper's Monthly give instances enough. The writer of this article prefers merely to give facts without mentioning the names of the companies involved. Holding companies have acquired the control of establishments with the intention, successfully carried out, of running them into the ground and securing their business for other subsid-

aries in which their directors were really interested. Let us remark in passing that a holding company always attempts to place its own men on the board of directors of the subsidiaries. At other times these men divert more and better business, which by right ought to go to a certain subsidiary, to their favorite corporation and thus are guilty of a very unethical discrimination. The minority of the shareholders of the injured companies, as Bonbright justly remarks, too frequently are unable to obtain redress, either because litigation is too expensive for them, or because it is impossible to furnish evidence which holds in court, for the simple reason that the holding company has too many means to cover its tracks.

Again it does happen that the direction lies with a small group or even with one man who does not understand the proper direction of a subsidiary and dictates to it a policy which is ruinous. If that group consists of bankers and other capitalists who have no idea of the work of an industrial concern, but can see only a way to make money for their own corporation, the result is plain.

It has also happened that holding companies which were hopelessly bankrupt tried to save themselves by securing control of other companies without informing them of the risk they were taking in the combination. Not a few of the destructive bank failures which occurred during the last years were due to this piece of dishonesty, as the investigations of the committee appointed by the Senate of the United States proved to evidence. A holding company can commit this crime all the more easily because it can get hold of the securities of other concerns by merely exchanging them for its own securities, which in reality may be as worthless as waste paper.

Furthermore, a holding company acts against social justice and charity if it obtains control of companies which neither need nor want it. These companies have a natural right to independence; and it is for the best interests of the country to secure not only for its individual citizens but for its private corporations as much of reasonable independence in business as possible. Not without reason does Pius XI say: "It follows from the twofold character of ownership (as means to promote not only the private but the common welfare) that men *must* take into account not only their own advantages, but also the common good." It is to be lamented that even well-meaning men forget often enough this twofold character and think that as long as individuals suffer no material loss which can be expressed in dollars and cents, everything is all right.

Finally, the holding company may push its control and direction so far that it acquires that domination which Pius XI condemns; it stifles all competition, wields an invincible monopoly, fixes prices, "holds and controls money, governs credit, and determines its allotment, grasps, as it were, in its hands the very soul of production, so that no one dare breathe against its will." And with this ensues that "threefold struggle for domination . . . for dictatorship in the economic sphere itself; then the fierce

battle to acquire control of the State, so that its resources and authority may be abused in the economic struggle; finally the clash between the States themselves." We see this verified to its full extent in the case of the international bankers; but it also takes place on a smaller scale within nations and states.

The second object of the holding company is unified financing. This is effected chiefly in two ways. The holding company, issuing its own stock, either sells it to the public and lends the money thus obtained to the subsidiary, or it gives its securities (but always less than fifty per cent of the voting stock) to the subsidiary and receives in return an equal amount of the latter's securities. This mode of unified financing is profitable for subsidiaries which experience difficulties in selling their stock because they are not sufficiently known, because the banks and the public in general are slow to accept their issues, or because as a limited and local enterprise they have a smaller chance for making money. By a limited enterprise we understand one which, on account of the goods or services in which it deals, has always a rather dull season; thus a firm that deals in ice has comparatively little business in winter, one that deals in fuel is slack in summer; while a fuel and ice company is busy all the year round. This second activity of holding companies in itself is morally unobjectionable. The only danger is that they may charge too much for their services; for instance, they may exact a higher interest on a loan than the law permits.

While in this second kind of activity the holding company is formed and exists before and independently of the operating company, in the third kind it presupposes the existence of the latter and is formed out of it, namely, when it is formed and used for capital inflation or further capitalization of the operating concern out of which and for the benefit of which it is organized. If a corporation organized under the authority of a certain state to do business in that state intends to issue more stocks and bonds without acquiring new assets on which these securities are to be based, it needs the permission of that state; and in order to obtain permission, it must submit a detailed statement of all its assets, liabilities, etc. This it may not wish to do for various reasons; for example, because by that statement it would be evident that it is evading to some extent the tax laws and would, in consequence, be sued for back taxes and be taxed higher for the future. It may also be that its "equity," (the amount which would be left to it if all its indebtedness were paid), is rather small, and that it wants to make a better showing by increasing the stock and bonds. Furthermore, it may desire to issue a larger amount of securities than the state commission would allow. Therefore it has recourse to the expedient of forming a holding company. The majority stockholders must first of all decide in which state they will take out articles of incorporation; for no corporation can do any business except that which is specified in these articles. Moreover, at one time most states had anti-trust laws which forbade the formation of hold-

ing companies; but when New Jersey began to issue charters for them many followed its example. Finally, it is more expedient for the holding companies to work under a charter issued by a state different from that in which they do at least their principal business and which is more lenient with them. Next they obtain the charter and organize. Hereupon the majority stockholders of the original company, let us call it "Company A," go as stockholders of Company A to themselves as the president and board of directors of the holding company, which we will call "Company B," and exchange their securities in Company A for those of Company B, share for share. Now bear in mind that, even though the shares of Company A have been transferred to Company B, they still remain assets of Company A, and that Company A has now new assets in the securities it got from Company B on which it can issue new stock of its own. It does so and sells the entire issue to Company B. Company B obtains the money to pay for them by issuing debentures, preferred and common stock of its own based upon the new issue bought from Company A which it sells to the public, taking care, however, not to get rid of too much of the common stock lest it lose the voting control in its own concern.

"A clever trick," you say; but is it not in reality "eating one's cake and keeping it?" Thoughtless persons may enjoy the trickery, but what must an earnest moralist say about such an evasion of the law and such play with crooked technicalities? The general public will loudly condemn such a practice only when it fails and people lose in consequence of it. But is it dishonest only when it inflicts pecuniary losses? Are the demands of social justice and obedience to the spirit of the law mere suggestions of something that means higher virtue but imposes no obligation on conscience? The words of Pius XI certainly imply more than a mere exhortation to practice virtuous acts of social justice and charity as works of supererogation. While it is true that the neglect of the duties of charity and social justice does not induce the obligation of making restitution, nevertheless it is sinful. We must distinguish between works of charity whose omission is not positively uncharitable, and those whose neglect positively violates charity; between works whose omission merely leaves undone things which promote the common welfare and those whose omission positively injures the common welfare.

The last purpose of the holding company is "pyramided stock control with a minimum amount of investment." It would take too long to describe the details of the process as it actually takes place with all its possible manipulations. However, the plan may be briefly explained by the following outline: Suppose we have a large business concern capitalized at 150 millions of dollars; 50 millions in bonds, 50 millions in preferred non-voting stock, 50 million in common or voting stock. To get control of this business the promoters have to secure only a little more than 50 per cent of the common stock. Let us assume that they obtain 26 millions. They form

Holding Company No. 1, transferring to it all this stock. Holding Company No. 1 on this stock issues and sell

10 millions of bonds
6 millions of preferred stock
4 millions of common stock

—
Total: 20 millions

This is the part of the investment which is already taken out of the original sum and left free for further ventures. They now control the business worth 150 millions by the comparatively small investment of six millions.

Now they form Holding Company No. 2, transferring to it those 6 millions, on which as a basis they issue and sell:

2 millions of bonds
1 million of preferred stock
1 million of common stock

—
Total: 4 millions withdrawn and left free for other ventures.

They now control the 150 millions by the slender sum of 2 millions.

Now they form Holding Company No. 3 to take care of the 2 millions of the original investment which are still tied up in the business; they issue and sell:

\$500,000 bonds and debentures
500,000 preferred stock
400,000 common stock

—
Total: \$1,400,000 withdrawn from the business.

Thus they now control with an investment of \$600,000.

Finally they organize Holding Company No. 4 to take care of the \$600,000 left. This issues and sells:

\$200,000 debentures
200,000 preferred stock
95,000 common stock

—
Total: \$495,000 taken out.

With the remaining \$105,000 they now control 150 millions and five companies. In other words, seven ten-thousandths of the capital controls the whole business, or seven cents control one hundred dollars, or, if this financial structure which every financier of some experience will declare to be unsafe and bound to fail sooner or later comes to grief, the promoters will lose seven cents for every one hundred dollars lost by the public.

This is a fictitious case which we have proposed for the purpose of showing what pyramiding can do. We may justly doubt whether in reality the process will ever be pushed to such extremes. However, Bonbright gives an instance in which more than two billions five hundred millions are controlled by an investment of less than twenty millions; in other words, less than 1/125 of the capital controls the entire business.

When explaining the definition of the holding company we said that it controls other companies or materially in-

fluences them by holding voting stock and through other means. Bonbright gives instances of holding companies which do not hold a majority of the voting stock but only a minority of it. In this case that minority interest is propped up by other means. Such are contracts, advisory functions, services, interlocking directorates, community of individual stockholders, common officers, voting trusts, and family relations, the father controlling one, the son another, the brother or son-in-law another.

However, pyramiding becomes objectionable for other reasons besides the power which it gives. First among them is the danger of the collapse of these financial structures, which involves the ruin of many, often of persons who have no means of repairing their losses. How many have during the last five years been deprived of all the savings made in the course of a long life to provide for old age; how many small business men have been utterly ruined through the failures of banks which were holding companies or their subsidiaries. Nor is this to be wondered at. For the arrangement, the working, and the manipulations of these institutions are so complicated that not even "wizards" can sufficiently oversee them. The profession of ignorance which some of them made when testifying under oath before the Senate Committee which had been charged with the investigation of their failures was, in the writer's opinion, in accordance with the truth; for nobody can have a comprehensive idea of all the intricacies of the machine they have built. Moreover, the whole mechanism is so involved that the failure of one part is apt to ruin the whole machinery.

There remain quite a number of further objections which a moralist ought to make against the big holding companies. There is the chance of covering up ethically and legally wrong manipulations. The moves of the men who direct them can be made so secretly that they escape even expert accountants and examiners. One reason for this lies in the possibility "of passing the ball so far down the line that nobody knows where it is."

It is the general practice for the stockholder of the operating companies which are taken over by a holding company to receive, as consideration for his stock in the operating company, non-voting stock in the holding company; thus he is kept in complete ignorance of what is going on. As a matter of law, he is left with little more than the faint hope that a group of men appointed as the board of directors by the promoters of the holding company to run the enterprise for his benefit will actually work for his best interest. Of course, this complaint applies not only to the holding company but to many other corporations; but it has far more force against the holding company. The ordinary stockholder never can know whether it gives him his due.

A more serious complaint concerns the holding companies which do business beyond the territory of the state in which they are incorporated: namely, that there is no authority to regulate them and call them to account. It is a serious defect of our laws that while a corporation work-

ing under the charter of one state can do business in the entire Union, only the state issuing the charter can regulate it and hold it responsible, and this only with regard to the activity it exercises within the limits of that state. The powers of the federal authority are restricted to some comparatively few matters which concern the Interstate Commerce and Trade Commission and the execution of the federal income tax, the custom duties, the federal liquor law and the postal regulations. President Roosevelt on various occasions has announced that he intends to inaugurate legislation which will remedy this defect.

Fr. Wilfrid Parsons in *America* called attention to another complaint when he wrote: "Holding company was piled on holding company, each receiving a wage out of the operating company's production, though it did not produce itself. The issuing of these holding-company stocks went on without any legal supervision, and much of it was accompanied with grave loss to the investors, and even to the operating company in which labor had an interest in the partnership." Of course, the president, directors, officials of the holding company cannot be expected to work without remuneration or salary. That salary has to come from the operating companies. The operating company must either be satisfied with a smaller gain, or, if it reimburses itself, it must do so by raising the prices of its articles or reducing the wages of its employees.

Now to sum up. The holding company taken in the abstract is not objectionable from a moral point of view; it becomes such on account of the ends and purposes for which it is used and the means which it employs. The danger of its abuse is all the greater on account of the secrecy which it can secure for its manipulations and the absence of an authority that can regulate, supervise, and, where needed, punish it.

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Cogito: A Philosophical Meditation

ANDRE BREMOND

St. Aloysius College, Maison Saint Louis, Jersey

EDITOR'S NOTE: We print this article as illustrating one kind of dynamic Aristotelianism which is coming into vogue. Aristotle (and with him Saint Thomas) has too often been accused of rationalizing philosophy to the point of making it static and sterile. Hence a search is being made for the dynamic (or should we say the oretic, or "mystical"?) element in that philosophy. The reader of the accompanying article should keep in mind that the EGO is not considered precisely as substantial, but as conscious. With this proviso we trust the contribution will be refreshing and stimulating.

"And such a want-wit Cogito makes of me
That I have much ado to know myself."

COGITO . . . I am! Am I really? and what am I? and (a suggestion from William James) how many? and how is Cogito the beginning, the starting point of philosophy?

Cogito is to Descartes and to the Cartesian the first evidence and the ground of all certitude. At any moment I should be able to sum up all my knowledge about things and God Himself in an indefinitely extensive Cogito. Let then Cogito be the first positive meditation of my philosophical retreat, just as much a Foundation as "*Homo creatus est*" is the Foundation of St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises. Descartes does not stop to meditate on his "Cogito" because he considers it so simple and so clear that there cannot be two ways of conceiving it. It affords no matter to the meditative mind, no more than a theorem on the equality of triangles does to the mathematician. Once the fact is stated, with its immediate conclusion or implication: "*Cogito, Sum*," Descartes proceeds to the real work. He is in a hurry to build a metaphysic on that foundation and a physic on top of the metaphysic.

The trouble is that post-Cartesian philosophers, if they begin at the Cogito, do not find it so clear, and do not, in fact, agree to its implications and meaning. Some retain it as the first evidence indeed, but they think it would be better expressed by "*Cogitatur*," "There is thought" or "It thinks" (just as we say "It rains"), the subject *Ego* and the correlative object being only the first inference or hypothesis which follows the "*Cogitatur*." Other formulae are "*Cogito, ergo aliquid est*," or, as a modern German thinker puts it, "*Cogito, ergo sumus*," the fact of thinking being essentially a social fact. Lastly, I know of one or two bold Idealists whose genuine formula, if candidly expressed, would be "*Cogito, ergo non sum*." But my purpose is not to make an historical review of the interpretations of Cogito. Ignatian trained, I mean to meditate upon myself, though I may welcome any suggestion from philosophers ancient or modern, if I find it helpful.

As a *compositio loci* one may imagine Descartes *redivivus*, come back to life, for one or two hours and assisting at a lecture of William James on the "Self" and the "Selves," on the different "Me's" and that most mysterious *Ego*. We may sympathize with the painful surprise of the venerable ancestor, his perplexity and indignation. "Self is not so simple," says the modern psychologist, "there are many selves in one: the sensible and bodily self, more or less complex and extensive; the spiritual self (hardly conscious in many people), and the social self, which is the most important, for what matters to most of us is not what we are in ourselves for ourselves (such a solitary self-conscious and self-sufficient *Ego* is hardly real) but what others think about us. My Self is grounded upon Reputation. Cogito: I am actually thinking. What of that? It is not really so important; I need not sustain the effort of thinking; I may go to sleep; nay, to eternal sleep. *Cogitatur de me; ergo, I am*." "*Volito vivu' per ora virum!*" But that social self is itself many sided. divisible into many selves. Is there then no deep unity of the many selves? no one substantial EGO? "You mean the Pure *Ego*"; says William James, "I was coming to that. It is most mysterious. Some, as you know, deny it."

"'Setting aside some metaphysicians,' says Hume, 'I may venture to affirm of the rest of mankind that they are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement.'—Hume here says too much and too little. There is indeed a psychological flux, but no discrete perceptions. Distinct states of consciousness, distinct sensations, are not primitive facts, but the work of the analytic mind. On the other hand, in that most confused stream of conscious life, there is felt a striving after unity and that active synthetic principle is no less real than the stream itself; I call it the *Ego*. The *Ego* is a fact, a primary and evident fact, for the man of the street as well as for the metaphysician. Now is it a substance? It is real; but in what sense? It may be, as Kant puts it, merely functional. Any distinct act of thinking is a synthesis, the making of a phenomenal object out of sensible intuitions by means of certain forms of the Mind; and the form of all forms, the deepest and most necessary is I think. But still, that subjective I, as it is the deeper and most necessary subject of all acts of cognition, cannot, by any means, become an object, cannot be known as an object. It is bound to remain behind the veil, and so its reality, besides being a necessary mode of thinking, will remain unknown and unknowable."

And William James continues on. . . .

Now I shall leave the lecture room (Descartes has long

since left it, indignant) and proceed to the personal quest of my *Ego*. I have heard enough to be perplexed and to realize that the evidence of *Cogito* is at best a confused evidence. I think I am a thinking substance; but what is substance? and my substantiality? Is it solid enough to build my philosophy upon? I want to reflect upon it, to try its solidity. It is no more than a word used to sum up the hopeless diversity of my feelings? But in that case, who is it that does the summing up? And if its reality be doubted, who does the doubting?

If I am ever perversely tempted to doubt about my identity, I have only to feel with my hands the solidity of my body. That, at any rate, remains and seems to guarantee the perseverance of the spiritual self which it enfolds. A short lived security! Here comes the modern scientist who states with scientific assurance and experimental proof that what I call my body is ever changing, so that of its actual elements, nothing will be left in a very short time but a certain proportion and order of the entirely renewed parts. To a spectator whose vision was adapted to the world of atoms, for whom the flow of life would be accelerated in such a way that he lived in one of his minutes hundreds of years, as we count them, what I call my body would appear as the momentary center of a vortex in a stream of indefinitely subtle matter: a stream of thought, conscious or half conscious instants, strangely associated with a stream of matter. There is the reality of my substance. The more unstable of the two, body and the conscious self, is evidently the body, since what is more stable in it is the order of the parts; and that is a mere idea of my evanescent mind. And so it happens that, as regards the solidity of my body, the reality of my body, the substance of my body, what remains the same is but one of my innumerable ideas,—a feeling, but only an illusion.

Most disappointing words: *Cogito* and *Ego*! When, after my quarter of an hour of fruitless reflection, I take up again the interrupted task, the work of life; when I get back to my business, the *Ego* is back again, undoubted, undoubted, asserting himself among people and things over against the other *Ego*'s.

When I say "*Cogito, Sum*," I mean something more than my actual psychic state; I mean the stable, the permanent *Ego*, the enduring substance of the transient feelings and thoughts. But has that substance, as it is permanent, any intelligible character? In what does it differ from the Kantian *Noumenon*, which is regarded as real and as unthinkable? How and when shall I be able to rest in conscious possession of my *Ego*? In such perplexity, to whom shall I turn but to the doctor of *Aporiai*, Aristotle?

When modern speculation has landed you in some hopeless quandary, metaphysical or psychological, turn to Aristotle. He is the man for hopeless cases! And first, he will not answer your anxious question with a sneer, as if there were no question at all. No, he will welcome your difficulty, anxious to help. For one that you propose, he will

give you three, and now and then a solution, too, or he will at least point the way. In the present question of the *Ego*, or, as he expresses it, the mind, the thinking subject, what has he to say? First, that there is no more difficult question for the philosopher; then, after beating about the bush, he will unexpectedly fall upon a definition which fits in wonderfully well with our experience of the self, a definition neither unduly exalting it as a proud self-sufficient *ego*, nor depressing it; not what I am but what I may and must hope to be: not the static, but the dynamic *Ego*,—the *Ego* in the making.

This answer of Aristotle reminds one of what the Abbé Sieyès used to say of the Third Estate in the early days of the French Revolution: "What is the Third Estate in the Realm? Nothing! What ought it to be? Everything! What does it ask to be? Something!" So Aristotle answers about the mind. What is the thinking *Ego*? Nothing; in the beginning, nothing; but it can and must become everything. The mind first seems to be lost in the immensity of the universe. It is a mirror, indeed, less than a mirror; it is a power, or, better still, a possibility of reflection; it is, in the spiritual order, *mera potentia*, not actual knowledge, but the unconscious readiness to think. As soon as it is awakened from its sleep, it begins, not merely to reflect as a mirror, but to grasp, to conceive, to remake things, to render them more intelligible and consequently more real; for the reality of any object is the *Idea* it imperfectly embodies. And so, from the first conscious act of judging, there begins a bitter fight between the mind and the world, a fight for supremacy, a drama of rival ambitions, each intent on conquering and absorbing the other. Yet things do not need my consciousness in order to exist. They existed before. My brief candle of consciousness may go out, but the external world will pursue its course. This seems obvious, but the reverse is equally true, Mind, *my* mind, sets itself as judge of the reality of things. It need not be abashed by the immensity of the universe, for matter, indefinitely extended, has no reality if it has no purpose, no meaning, no intelligible unity.

So "the world is unconscious thought hanging on the Thought that thinks itself, *Noesis Noeseos*." Its reality is its intelligibility, its relation to spirit. If it does not depend on my individual mind for existence, still my mind has an affinity with the Divine Creative Mind which the world has not; and I may say that nature depends on my conscious mind, since it has been made to be used, to be realized, to be understood, and even recreated by the human mind. An object, clearly understood, or better, idealized in the thinker's or the artist's mind, acquires a higher reality. It has been given to the soul that the soul may thrive upon it, and tend, through knowledge, art and rational use of it, to the perfect realization of itself. Thus the making of conscious *Ego*'s is the *raison d'être* of the material world.

Such is my *Ego* of unbounded ambition, starting as a beggar in his quest of himself. But what if it is doomed

lose, as it advances, what it has acquired? What if it is a being of instantaneous reality coming to birth and perishing in the same instant? Life in time (so I muse) is perpetual loss and annihilation; what I had an hour ago I have no more; what I was I am no more; what is past is as if it had never been; I was young and I am young no more, and I do not see how I can be said to possess my youth, unless, in a mysterious way, the deeds, some deeds at least, of my youth follow me.

But is it altogether true that the past is no more? If the past is nothing, how can it live in remembrance? There is some part of myself which treasures up past actions, and thoughts, and calls them back to mind according to the needs of the moment. That would be impossible if my whole self were carried away in the flux of consciousness. In order to keep the past and to recall it, there must be, or some part of myself must be *beside* or above the stream. And so in a sense, nothing is lost of what I have done or thought; it lives for better or for worse in the depth of my being, and at times some part of it comes to the light of consciousness.

There are, according to Plato, two kinds of reality; what is always, eternally the same, perfect existence and perfect intelligibility; and secondly, there is a world of things which become and *are not*, which are ever hovering between being and non-being. We may posit a third kind between these two extremes: what becomes and *remembers*. Now memory partakes in a strange way of the eternal. It is the mark of eternity in a rational creature; it is not subject to the conditions of space and time. It is the "stuff" of the *Cogito*, one might say the reality of the human *Ego*. The word (*verbum*) through which I express myself, what I know and what I am or what I mean to be, is called by St. Augustine: "the child of my heart and the offspring of the memory as well." Memory, he says, is something strong and awful, "*nescio quid horrendum*." It is a witness to my perishing and my permanence. My successive "times" (*Tempora*) pass and seem

to be lost, but memory, all the while, keeps the account. It is ever trying to combine the eternal instant with the past and with the future which it anticipates. If it were merely mirroring the past, it would lose all its power of realization; but it connects past with future, organizing the future with the past, both remembering and looking forward.

Even so, if man were left to himself, our *Cogito*, in its fullness, of remembrance and anticipation, would be a failure, a ceaseless effort, ever begun and ever frustrated, of "collecting myself out of the dispersion of my wandering thoughts." The whole must be ordered to acquire some stability, so it needs must be referred to God. "Thou, O my God and Father, art truly eternal, my only comfort, my stay, while my poor self is ever losing itself in the multitude and confusion of its thoughts, until I take refuge in Thee, melting and being purified in the fire of Thy love." *Et stabo atque solidabor in te*. Let us, therefore, not say "*Cogito, ergo sum*;" that is not very clear; but "*Cogito Deum, ergo sum*."

To conclude: the reality of my *Ego* cannot be grasped and held as something which remains the same; the *Ego* is ever changing. What remains is its relation to the ideal perfection of self; and so the evidence of the *Ego* is in its striving to become what it *must* be, but is not yet. Thus the real *Cogito* is "*Cogito, ergo esse volo*." In that sense the dynamic *Cogito* may be said to be the starting point of philosophy, both speculative and practical. What is philosophy but the knowledge of man in his relation to the Whole, and of man and the Whole in their relation to *what is*: to God as the source of all being and knowledge!

And *Cogito* is as well the progress as the end of philosophy; from the beginning it contains the whole and God Himself in a confused way. The task and the progress of knowledge is to make it clearer and deeper. The end is *Deus est*, and *Cogito*; but the *Cogito* exists in the dazzling light of God's Creative Love.

The Triumph of the Theaetetus

[Continued from March]

CHARLES J. O'NEIL
St. Louis University

V

HERE remain for consideration in the concluding sections of this essay two important divisions of the dialogue. The first division is the final refutation of the Protagorean theory of knowledge—the refutation, namely, in which the ontology and psychology involved in the position of the "flowing philosophers" are given some consideration. (179d-186e) The second division of the dialogue is the refutation of the second and third definitions of knowledge. For convenience we may very briefly state the thesis of this essay: that the *Theaetetus* clears

the ground for the establishment of the Scholastic criterion of logical truth and motive of certitude—the knowability of things, *evidentia objectiva, perspicuitas rerum*. In analyzing the dialogue we have indicated (at least by hypothesis) a parallel Platonic criterion, namely the knowability of the Ideas, or "ultimate ontological units of reality."³⁰ We called this, for want of a better name, *perspicuitas Idearum*. Our whole endeavor has been to show that the refutation of Protagoras must imply and depend upon either such a Platonic criterion of truth, or else upon that of the Scholastics. We have attempted to show that in

this way the dialogue has its fullest cogency, avoids all fallacy, and escapes every retort.

But Plato himself must go further than the doctrine of the criterion of truth for a thorough study of the problem of knowledge. When he does so the *Theaetetus* becomes a psychological study of the theory of knowledge. It is rather to these psychological considerations that much of the discussion of *Theaetetus*' second and third definitions of knowledge belong. Accordingly we will touch upon them but briefly in the present paper. However, the psychological questions are introduced by a short treatment of the ontology and a brief examination of the psychology involved in the refutation of the Protagoreans and Heracliteans. We return, therefore, to the text for a somewhat detailed treatment of the epistemological refutation in which Socrates finally dismisses *Theaetetus*' first definition and the relativism of Protagoras.

The ontology of flux is the basis of the epistemology of relativism. And no true philosopher believes that he has thoroughly refuted a given theory of knowledge without some investigation of its metaphysical foundations. This is the rationale of the transition (at 179cde) where Socrates passes on to the Heraclitean flux. We may be wrong, he says in substance, we may not realize that the theory of Protagoras rests securely on that of Heraclitus' followers. "And in that case," he continues, "our *Theaetetus* was not so wide of the mark in identifying sensation and knowledge. And, therefore, we must draw nearer, as our defense of Protagoras urged, look closely at this 'reality in constant flux,' and give the theory a rap, to see whether it ring true or false." (179cd)

Theodorus now speaks of the "wild fellows," who profess this doctrine; they are "at war with the stationary"; dealing with them is impossible and he and Socrates must study out this theorem for themselves. "Like a geometrician," says a Scholiast, "he wants to set the problem and answer it once and for all: are all things changing or not."⁸¹ (179e-180c)

In the speech which follows (180c-181b) Plato admits through Socrates that for an adequate solution of the problem of knowledge the metaphysics of Parmenides must also be considered. For the present he deliberately confines himself to the "flowing philosophers" and proceeds to state the doctrine of universal flux and its consequences for the Protagorean theory of sensation and knowledge.

We must distinguish two kinds of motion, says Socrates, we have one kind "when a thing changes from one place to another or goes round in the same place." We have a second kind, "when a thing, remaining on the same spot, grows old, or becomes black from being white, or hard from being soft, or undergoes any other change." (181cd, Jowett) This second kind of change, "alteration," is intended by Plato to include what we call substantial as well as accidental change; just as "circulation" is intended to include all kinds of local motion.⁸² Socrates now assures Theodorus that the Heracliteans are bound to

assert that all things are changed in both these ways; for "universal flux" must mean that everything at every moment changes in every respect. (181de)

This leads us to a restatement of the Heraclitean theory of sensation, or, at least, Socrates' interpretation of that theory. Since all is motion, we ourselves are motion. But there are moments of contact in the streams of motion; eddies in the flux meet, so to say, and their union is sensation. This must not be thought to imply the least permanency. "For remember that we spoke in this fashion in our earlier discussion [of this theory of sensation, 156-157c]: that nothing has an absolute objective existence, not even agent or patient, but out of both as they come together—they become, while producing sensations and sensible things, the one of a certain quality, and the other a sense-percipient." (182b) This passage shows at least one thing clearly: the universal flux is such that nothing is exempted, knowledge (that is, sensation) is itself a flux, and is not in any wise concerned with permanence and essences. Socrates proceeds to show that this is the only admission he desires.

"We may leave the details of the theory unexamined," he says, "but we must not forget to ask them the only question with which we are concerned: Are all things in motion and flux? . . . And are they moved in both these ways which we distinguished; that is to say, they move in place and are also changed." (182c, Jowett)

Plato does not name any particular champion of this doctrine. Nor is this in line with his purpose. His one aim at present is to refute relativism thoroughly by showing that its basis in the metaphysics of flux is untenable. In our study of the text we have reached the final point of that refutation. How does Plato now refute the Heracliteans? What is the relation of his procedure to objective evidence and the criterion of truth? This raises the interesting point of how we may introduce a bit of epistemology into what seems pure metaphysics. (The relation becomes clearer when we turn to Aristotle's solution of this point.) But let us continue with our text. Socrates points out that if only universal local motion took place there might still be something permanent on which to base predication. There is no exception, however, if "alteration" is as universal and constant as "circulation."

"But now, since not even white continues to flow white, and whiteness itself is a flux or change which is passing into another color, and is never to be caught standing still, can the name of any color be rightly used at all?

"How is that possible . . . if while we are using the word the object is escaping in the flux?

" . . . Is there any stopping in the act of seeing and hearing? . . .

"Then we must not speak of seeing any more than of non-seeing, nor of any other sensation more than of non-sensation, if all things partake of every kind of motion? . . . Yet sensation is knowledge: so at least *Theaetetus* and I were saying. . . . Then when we were asked what is knowledge, we no more answered what is knowledge than what is not knowledge." (182de, Jowett)

To the neo-Scholastic reader Plato's procedure here

ould be quite evident. He shows that the Protagorean "flowing philosophers" have abandoned the principle of tradition and, consequently, its positive expression, the principle of identity. For them as for the sceptic, affirmation is an impossibility. Therefore they can affirm no definition of knowledge. This refutation is clever and gain; but does it employ or require a criterion of truth? Obviously enough it does not employ the ordinary Scholastic measure of logical truth in the ordinary sense of the effective evidence of a stable and knowable universe. Under the circumstances such a criterion would be intolerable, and, indeed, useless; for this is precisely the question at issue—whether the universe is permanent and knowable in any way other than in sensation. In other words, we are virtually returned to the *initium philosophandi*. At the *initium philosophandi* we can employ only an indirect demonstration of ultimate metaphysics, only indirect demonstration; and, as Geny points out, in every demonstration more refined criterion of truth is required.

"Speaking very strictly," he writes, "the objective criterion should be something *extrinsic* to the truth which is being demonstrated; and accordingly the ultimate objective criterion in a strict sense is had in the *first principles* upon which every demonstration must at length rest, and which are themselves readily evolved from our first notions; these notions are founded on being and in the last analysis really have Necessary Being as their ontological foundation."³³

In the case of our text, therefore, we cannot say that it relies directly on *perspicuitas rerum* as on a criterion of truth; nor should it so rely. But, as we have shown, it is an epistemological refutation. It reduces the relativism of the "flowing philosophers" to complete scepticism and abandons them there. It is an epistemological refutation, then, because it rests on *prima principia*, on the principle of contradiction and its affirmative counterpart, the principle of identity. This affirmative principle is a law of thought; it is naturally the first judgment to follow our very notion of being. Aristotle sets it down as the most certain of all principles³⁴—therefore as a law of thought;³⁵ and also as a principle of being—therefore as a first law of ultimate metaphysics. Truth and being, in other words, are related in such wise that this first principle cannot be denied without rendering all truth and cognition impossible. The doctrine of flux as expounded by the Heracliteans involves precisely this denial: first, because the doctrine maintains that contraries can be present at the same time in the same subject; and secondly, because it moves the distinction of true and false judgments.

This analysis—which rests heavily on Aristotle—of Plato's text shows that his refutation does, indeed, rest on a criterion of truth, on the *prima principia*, on being, on ultimate reality. Being and ultimate reality, thought and truth, and the *prima principia*, wherein these coincide, have their ontological foundation in Necessary Being, Pure Form, Purest Act. So for Plato the ontological basis will be found—we do not care to say how—in those "ultimate

ontological units of reality," truest objects of purest desire, sources of whatever is and is good, the Ideas.³⁶

These considerations have brought us to 183ab. At this point Plato once again and more explicitly accuses the "flowing philosophers" of abandoning the principle of contradiction. He adds a bit of artistic persiflage³⁷ here in the advice given to those clever gentlemen to get themselves a new language. Even "thus" and "not thus" are altogether too static for them; and there is scarcely any expression suitable "except perhaps 'no how' which is perfectly indefinite." (Jowett)

"And so, Theodorus," says Socrates, "we have got rid of your friend without assenting to his doctrine, that every man is the measure of all things—the wise man only is a measure; neither can we allow that knowledge is a sensation, certainly not on the basis of a perpetual flux, unless our friend Theaetetus is able to convince us that it is." (183bc, Jowett)

VI

We have followed Plato through some forty pages (142a-183c) of this "dialogue of search." He has dismissed Protagorean relativism twice or three times over; he has reduced to absurd contradiction the Heraclitean ontology of flux and the theory of sensation which it involves; but he seems to make no positive contribution toward a theory of knowledge, he makes no explicit statement of his own doctrine. Herein, from a Scholastic point of view at least, is the real triumph of the *Theaetetus*. If the dialogue proceeded to a thoroughgoing Platonic theory of knowledge it would undoubtedly be looked upon as a failure. But now—at least if our interpretation is correct—we must in justice consider it a triumphant bit of critical polemics. It is a victory whose consequences are proportionate to the doctrine of objective evidence, *perspicuitas rei*, as a criterion of truth.

This criterion and the intentional assimilation of extramental reality which it measures are adequately understood only on the supposition of a faculty higher than sense, a faculty which outreaches all sensory experience, and which, nothing daunted by the kaleidoscopic change of the universal pageant, apprehends and holds fast the forms of things. This is that power of intellection by which, as we saw in our opening paragraphs, the human soul vindicates its primacy in the world's hierarchy of forms. And now, in order to give the *coup de grace* to the theory that sensation is knowledge Plato must needs make a positive assertion by adverting to the soul as the principle of intelligence (183d).

After a page of dramatic interlude (183c-184b), in which the doctrine of Parmenides is reserved for treatment in the *Sophist*³⁸ and in which Theodorus readily yields his place in the discussion to the young Theaetetus, Socrates immediately proceeds to urge Theaetetus to another view of the subject. Sensation is knowledge; very well, but how do we get sensations? Do we see *with* our eyes or *through* them? Or, as Taylor puts it,³⁹ does the eye see and the ear hear or is it rather that I see and hear? (184bc) Theaetetus believes that the latter mode

of expression is more correct. The answer of Socrates is justly famous.

"Yes, my boy, for no one can suppose that in each of us, as in a sort of Trojan horse, there are perched a number of unconnected senses, which do not all meet in some one nature, the mind, or whatever we please to call it, of which they are the instruments, and with which through them we perceive the objects of sense." (184d, Jowett)

The passage so far does seem to admit interpreting "the mind" in this context as some sort of *sensus communis*, or "central unity of apperceptions." It would also seem that Plato ascribes all synthesis—even sensory synthesis—to thought.⁴⁰ The fact is, however, that it is not Plato's purpose here to distinguish nicely "between a sensory and a cognitive synthesis." It is clear from the text that Plato knew that all sensation is organic; it is clear that he held that sensation, even *sensus communis*, is not thought, and that thought is nothing less than spiritual. He is dealing with intellectual cognition in the best sense. Socrates asks the boy about the perception of such universal notions as existence, difference, and resemblance. Is there a special material organ for their perception? (185a-c)

"You are thinking of being and not-being," the boy says simply, "likeness and unlikeness, sameness and difference, and unity and plurality as applied to them; and you mean to ask through what bodily organ the soul perceives odd and even numbers and other arithmetical conceptions."

"You follow me excellently, Theaetetus, that is precisely what I am asking."

"Indeed, Socrates, I cannot answer; my only notion is that these, unlike objects of sense, have no separate organ but that the soul, by a power of her own, contemplates the universals in all things."

"You are a beauty, Theaetetus, and not ugly . . . for he who utters the beautiful is himself beautiful and good." (185c-e)

Socrates develops this thought by some important observations. Of all our notions "being" or "reality" is the most universal. And this together with like and unlike, noble and base is perceived by the soul herself—only by intellectual cognition. In all these the soul perceives essence and relations, and makes comparisons (186bc). In other words, the soul is adequated to the forms which constitute ultimate reality. Finally Socrates explicitly says that it is impossible for one to attain to truth and knowledge who does not attain to being; impossible to attain to being—since it is a universal notion—except by the soul's own power. "And knowledge," he adds triumphantly, "has now been most distinctly proved to be different from sensation." (186cde)

Materialists, of course, could offer objections to this psychology and raise further issues, as Paul Shorey points out,⁴¹ "but the absolute identification of *aisthesis* and *episteme* is sufficiently refuted, and the suggestiveness of this definition having been exhausted, a fresh start is made with the definition 'knowledge is true opinion.'" (187b) When this second definition, after much fascinating analysis of true and false judgment or "opinion" has at last been refuted by a rather simple argument (201abc), the third

and final definition is stated (explicitly at 202c)—"knowledge is true opinion combined with *logos*;" this is, "knowledge is true opinion giving an account of itself" (Campbell, *ad loc.*) Now, since the dismissal of the last definition is rather largely a reduction to the second we may well round off our discussion of the *Theaetetus* by indicating simply the relation between the refutation of the second definition and the criterion of truth.

Once the definition has been given, Socrates passes to a long discussion (187b-201c) of "opinion" and especially of "false opinion" and the possibility of error. This is not the place for a thorough Scholastic analysis of the passage, but one feels throughout that the dialogue is approaching the rejection of anything and everything short of *conformitas cognita intellectus et rei* as a definition of knowledge. We seem, also, unable to be satisfied with anything less than formal certitude—the well-known *assensus firmus mentis in veritatem cognitam praestitus motivo, quod contradictorii possibilitatem simultaneitatis et hinc erroris possibilitatem excludit eamque excludere cognoscitur*.⁴² For such certitude only an external ultimate motive and criterion can suffice. This is indeed the trend of the dialogue as indicated by Taylor: "Thus the point which Socrates is laboring to make is the sound one that it is impossible to have a psychological criterion of true and false beliefs."⁴³ (on 200c)

Socrates now refutes the second definition by showing that not all right opinion is knowledge. Lawyers persuade jurors that things have transpired of which the jurors have no immediate knowledge. Their judgment, we are to understand, is not placed with absolute certitude; assent has not been compelled by motives entirely outside the thinking subject. The reason that Plato gives for such a mental state is unworthy of the name of knowledge: this is that the jurors do not truly know the facts because they have not seen the events for themselves! (201c) Now since he admits the intentional assimilation, since he admits that the judgment placed (willy-nilly by the jurors) squares with the facts, he can be expressing dissatisfaction only because of the quality of the mental assent; only, in other words, because true knowledge, *conformitas cognita*, must be measured by extra-mental reality, objective evidence, the perspicuity of things.

We have been very brief in treating the second and third definitions of knowledge largely because the triumph of the *Theaetetus* is clear from Plato's treatment of the first definition. With great patience and great skill the *Theaetetus* clarifies many of the issues that must needs arise in connection with the problem of knowledge. Plato was well aware of the gravity of that problem and of its ethical import. For this reason he devoted to the problem of knowledge his profoundest study, his finest dialectical powers, his maturest style. He says, elsewhere, that the philosopher's aim is not to please his fellow servants but to speak words of wisdom for the joy of the gods. "As the Platonic gods were well pleased," adds Professor

ney, "with the inimitable dialectical subtlety of what old calls the 'barren logomachies of the Theaetetus.'" ⁴⁴

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ABSTRACTION (*Cont.*)

us agens, which by this mysterious abstraction renders *species* intelligible in act. The two operations together form the single act of cognition. Nor does anything pass from the entity of the object to that of the intellect; "*intelligibile in actu non est aliquid existens in materia*;" it is simply an actuation of the faculty of the object through abstraction.

Why does St. Thomas, with Aristotle, distinguish an active and a passive faculty in the intellect? Mere analysis of our intellectual operations reveals that the intellect is in an absolutely perfect act; hence it must be in some respect passive.

"Nullus autem intellectus creatus potest se habere ut actus respectu totius entis universalis; quia sic oporteret quod esset ens infinitum; unde omnis intellectus creatus per hoc ipsum quod est, non est actus omnium intelligibilium, sed comparatur ad ipsa intelligibilia sicut potentia ad actum. . . . Intellectus humanus, qui est infimus in ordine intellectuum, et maxime remotus a perfectione divini intellectus, est in potentia respectu intelligibilium, et in principio est 'sicut tabula rasa, in qua nihil est scriptum' . . . Sic igitur patet quod intelligere nostrum est quoddam pati."¹⁵

is in the actuation of the potency of the *intellectus possibilis* that intellectual apprehension is completed; for the presence of the sensible object, rendered abstractively immaterial by the *intellectus agens*, impresses the *intellectus sensibilis*, and thus the intentional similitude is perfected. We may say that this faculty is impressed; that is, that its potency is actuated by the *species actu intelligibilis*; in being impressed by the abstractively immaterial form which determines the essence of the object, it is impressed immediately by the object through a similitude produced

in itself ultimately by the object; and by this similitude it knows "what" the object is.

But since the intellect is passive, an active faculty must also be postulated in order that it be reduced to act. The function of this intellect is thus described by St. Thomas:

"Anima humana . . . pertingit ad intelligentiam veritatis cum quodam discursu et motu arguendo. Habet enim imperfectam intelligentiam; tum quia non omnia intelligit, tum quia in his quae intelligit, procedit de potentia in actum . . . Oportet dicere quod in ipsa [anima] sit aliqua virtus derivata a superiori intellectu, per quam possit phantasmata illustrare. Et hoc experimento cognoscimus, dum percipimus nos abstrahere formas universales a conditionibus particularibus, quod est facere actu intelligibilia."¹⁶

Note what *illustrare* means: to render the form intelligible in act by abstracting it from the material conditions represented by the phantasm; no more, no less. The work of the active intellect is to render the object capable of being received by the passive intellect; it directs the energy of cognition to the form as form, without attending to matter. The act by which the phantasm is rendered actually intelligible is the same act by which the passive intellect becomes *actu intelligens*; intellect and object unite in one single act of intentional union which we call the act of cognition. St. Thomas thus sums up:

"Anima intellectiva est quidem actu immaterialis, sed est in potentia ad determinatas species rerum. Phantasmata autem e converso sunt quidem actu similitudines specierum quarundam, sed sunt potentia immaterialia. Unde nihil prohibet unam et eandem animam, inquantum est immaterialis in actu, habere aliquam virtutem, per quam faciat immaterialia in actu, abstrahendo a conditionibus individualis materiae (quae quidem virtus dicitur intellectus agens), et aliam virtutem receptivam hujusmodi specierum, quae dicitur intellectus possibilis, inquantum est in potentia ad hujusmodi species."¹⁷

But how shall we designate exactly the rôle of the phantasm in this process of abstraction? In the first place, it is necessary for intellectual cognition; St. Thomas demonstrates this by the evidence of experience.¹⁸ On the other hand, it is not a complete and sufficient cause: "*Nihil autem corporeum potest imprimere in rem incorpoream; et ideo ad causandam intellectualem operationem secundum Aristotelem non sufficit sola impressio sensibilium corporum, sed requiritur aliquid nobilius*" [sc. *intellectus agens*].¹⁹ What, then, is the causality of the phantasm?

²⁰In receptione qua intellectus possibilis species rerum accipit a phantasmatis, se habent phantasmata ut agens instrumentale et secundarium, intellectus vero agens ut agens principale et primum; et ideo actionis effectus relinquitur in intellectu possibili secundum conditionem utriusque, et non secundum conditionem alterius tantum; et ideo intellectus possibilis recipit formas ut intelligibiles actu ex virtute intellectus agentis, sed ut similitudines determinatarum rerum ex cognitione phantasmatum; et sic formae intelligibiles in actu non sunt per se existentes neque in phantasia neque in intellectu agente, sed solum in intellectu possibili."²⁰

The instrumental causality of the phantasm set forth by St. Thomas in this passage means nothing unless it is based on the reality of the process of abstraction. As we

have noted, he states frequently enough that a material agent cannot affect an immaterial object; nor can it do so even as the instrument of a spiritual agent. However, it is not in virtue of its materiality that the phantasm is an instrument; it is in virtue of the abstractive immateriality produced by the *intellectus agens*. Though it remains a sensible representation of the individual, it is considered by the *intellectus agens* without regard to its individual determinations. The *intellectus agens* is the cause in so far as it renders the object intelligible in act; the phantasm is the cause in so far as in virtue of the principal cause it furnishes the essence of a determined object to be cognized. Deny this possibility, and you close off the intellect from any cognition of material objects whatsoever.

We may justly ask what is the exact meaning of this much used and much abused term *species intelligibilis in actu*. It is nothing mysterious; it is simply the nature of the sensible object considered in itself without regard to the material conditions in which it exists. It is intelligible because, though it does not and cannot exist as immaterial, it is considered without attention to its matter, and hence is *abstractively* immaterial. Obviously, since the form is individuated only by its union with the potency of matter, a form thus understood is not understood as individual; it is applicable to an indefinite number of material objects; it is a universal idea, at least virtually, and becomes formally so when its potential multiplicity is attended to by the intellect. The universal, says St. Thomas, may be considered in two ways: one is "*ipsa natura communis, prout subjacet intentioni universalitatis*;" the other, "*secundum se*."²¹ The first is the nature of the object which is understood, and as a real object it is not universal; its universality is the product of the intellect—"prout subjacet intentioni universalitatis." The second is the same nature, not as it exists in itself, but as it is apprehended by the mind as applicable not merely to one object, but to an indefinite number of individuals. In the first St. Thomas distinguishes a

"duplex est: unum quidem materiale, secundum quod est in materia naturali; aliud autem immateriale, secundum quod est in intellectu. Secundum igitur quod habet esse in materia naturali, non potest ei advenire intentio universalitatis, quia per materiam individuatur. Advenit igitur ei universalitatis intentio secundum quod abstrahitur a materia individuali. Non est autem possibile quod abstrahatur a materia individuali realiter . . . Sic igitur intellectus absque falsitate abstrahit genus a speciebus, inquantum intelligit naturam generis, non intelligendo differentias. Et similiter abstrahit speciem ab individuis, inquantum intelligit naturam speciei, non intelligendo individualia principia. Sic igitur patet, quod naturae communi non potest attribui intentio universalitatis nisi secundum esse quod habet in intellectu; sic enim solum est unum de multis, prout intelligitur praeter principia, quibus unum in multa dividitur; unde relinquitur, quod universalis, secundum quod sunt universalis, non sunt nisi in anima. Ipsae autem naturae quibus accidit intentio universalitatis sunt in rebus. Et propter hoc nomina significantia naturas ipsas praedicantur de individuis."²²

This lengthy citation may be excused because it demon-

strates so clearly what the *species intelligibilis* means. The nature of an object cannot become actually intelligible unless it becomes abstractively immaterial; we cannot make it abstractively immaterial unless we separate it from material conditions; and in so doing we remove from it what makes it individual, we universalize it. This we do without attending to the fact that it is universalized when we return upon our intellectual operation, we perceive that the object possesses a *natura communis*. First we apprehend it as "white"; and then we observe that in this note of whiteness it is not distinguished from an indefinite number of other white objects. We do not observe this in the formation of the primitive ideas; but the primitive idea as such is removed from all individual conditions.

St. Thomas anticipates a possible objection against the theory of cognition by abstraction.²³ If the *intellectus possibilis* cognizes the abstracted *species*, then how does it attain the object of cognition immediately? Is not the *species abstracta* itself the object of cognition? The objection is already answered in part by his oft-repeated statement of the fundamental principle of abstraction. "*Cognoscit unum sine altero intelligi, et vere, dummodo unum non sit in ratione alterius*."²⁴ The quiddity which is abstractively apprehended is the quiddity of the object, though it is understood without the material conditions in which it exists in the object. The quiddity is an intentional similitude through which the object is apprehended; obviously, since an entitative transmission is impossible, it can be cognized no other way than *per similitudinem*. "*Similitudo rei intellectae, quae est species intelligibilis, est forma secundum quam objectum intellectus intelligit*."²⁵ The intellect does not cognize the *species*, but the object through the *species*.

So far it should be evident that there is nothing mysterious about the process of abstraction. But we are not yet out of the woods; several objections may be urged by those who regard abstraction as a metaphor, to all of which the text of St. Thomas offers an answer.

We may ask, in the first place, how, granted all that has been said, an abstraction from matter is possible. For the essence of a material object is a material essence; and unless we mean to say that, for instance, in cognizing matter I cognize his soul apart from his body, then we cannot say that we abstract the form from matter. Hence it is argued that abstraction is a mere metaphor; the sensible object alone determines the active intellect to operation; the object itself is intelligible.

This objection misses the point so frequently taken by St. Thomas that a material object *qua* material cannot be actually intelligible to an immaterial faculty; nevertheless, St. Thomas replies to it.

"Materia est duplex, scilicet communis, et signata vel individualis. Communis quidem, ut caro et os; individuales autem, ut haec carnes et haec ossa. Intellectus igitur abstrahit speciem a materia sensibili individuali, non autem a materia communi. Intellectus igitur abstrahit speciem rei naturalis a materia sensibili individuali, non a materia sensibili com-

*muni; sicut speciem hominis abstrahit ab his carnibus et his ossibus, quae non sunt de ratione speciei, ut dicitur; et ideo sine eis considerari potest. Sed species hominis non potest abstrahi per intellectum a carnibus et ossibus."*²⁶

The point of St. Thomas' reply is this: we do not say that the intellect abstracts from matter, but from material determinations. In cognizing the object through the abstraction of the form we do not abstract the form as pure and self-subsisting, which would be false, but as a material principle, the act of an individual material object determining that object to be what it is. We cognize the matter only through its actuation by the form.

The objection, however, is yet urged; how can it be said that our cognition is in its first movements a formation of universal ideas? This is simply a misapprehension of St. Thomas' explanation; the *species intelligibilis* is abstractively universal in so far as it is apprehended apart from all individual determinations; the reflection by which we apprehend the formal universality of this essence is another distinct act. Nor does he say that the primitive concept expresses the object with the exactness of a philosophical definition; but however obscure, however generic the concept, even if we cognize no more of the object than certain accidental forms inhering in it, yet we cognize it by abstracting the form from the individual conditions of matter. It is evident that in this matter we cannot expect to argue from internal experience; deductive reasoning alone can offer a valid explanation, and it is quite idle to sneer at the abstractive universality of the *species intelligibilis* because we cannot find it by an introspective report.

The question, however, may be asked: if this is what cognition through abstraction means, how can it be said that we cognize the individual object? The question is already answered in part when we say that the *species intelligibilis* is not the object of our cognition, but the *forma secundum quam objectum cognoscitur*; but this is no more than an indication of the way in which we cognize the individual. St. Thomas admits: "*Singulare in rebus naturalibus intellectus noster directe et primo cognoscere non potest,*"²⁷ for the reason that the *species intelligibilis* abstracted from the material determinations that make the form individual.

"*Indirecte autem et quasi per quamdam reflexionem potest cognoscere singulare. Quia sicut supra dictum est,*²⁸ *etiam postquam species intelligibiles abstraxerit, non potest secundum eas actu intelligere, nisi convertendo se in phantasmata, in quibus species intelligibiles intelligit. . . . Et hoc modo format hanc propositionem: Socrates est homo."*²⁹

"*Cognoscit enim naturam speciei, sive quod quid est, directe extendendo seipsum, ipsum autem singulare per quamdam reflexionem, in quantum redit super phantasmata, a quibus species intelligibiles abstrahuntur."*³⁰

What does the famous phrase *convertendo se ad phantasmata* mean? It has already been explained how the object of cognition is sensibly represented by the phantasm; it remains to be seen how the individual object is

cognized as an individual member of a species. Its essence is cognized through abstraction; but it exists as a real individual essence, and must be cognized as the essence of this individual. But it is individuated through matter, which is not intelligible; how are we to cognize it?

"*Particulare autem apprehendimus per sensum et imaginationem; et ideo necesse est ad hoc quod intellectus actu intelligat suum objectum proprium, quod convertat se ad phantasmata, ut speculetur naturam universalem in particulari existentem."*³¹

We designate the essence by an implicit judgment as existing individually in the individual which is represented by this phantasm; and this indirect cognition is all that we can expect to attain. In the last analysis, we cognize the individual by pointing our finger at it—"this." But this indirect cognition is for us adequate: "*Natura . . . cujuscumque materialis rei cognosci non potest complete et vere, nisi secundum quod cognoscitur ut in particulari existens.*"³² It yet remains to be demonstrated how any more perfect cognition of the individual object as individual is possible for the human intellect in its state of corporeal union. We can describe the individual only by the abstracted notes which we predicate of it; apart from them we know nothing of the subject of these predications.

One thing more remains: a brief discussion of one of St. Thomas' favorite phrases: "*Intellectum in actu est intellectus in actu.*" One almost feels that the Angelic Doctor has not here shown his usual felicity in the choice of words; for it is doubtful whether anything he said has been the subject of more misconceptions. Not that the phrase does not express most exactly and accurately the union of the mind with its object—it does; but it has been wrenched from its context and twisted into I know not how many meanings. The principles already outlined will indicate its significance.

St. Thomas' theory of cognition is erected upon his fundamental metaphysical principle of act and potency.³³ The passive intellect is *in potentia intelligens*; the object is *in potentia intelligibile*; neither can of itself reduce itself to act. The activity of the *intellectus agens* renders the object represented by the phantasm actually intelligible by abstraction from material conditions; the *species* in becoming actually intelligible impresses the passive intellect; in one and the same act the object becomes intelligible and the intellect becomes actually intelligent. "*Intellectum in actu est intellectus in actu*" in the unity of one act; each retains its own identity while becoming the other.

Such in brief and inadequate outline is the teaching of St. Thomas on abstraction. The few texts cited, to which countless others could and ought to be added, indicate the leading principles of his doctrine. If we but let St. Thomas speak for himself, he will show us that he has a solution of the problem which is reasonable, which is consistent, which answers questions. Indeed, the ultimate intention of every puny mind which is so unconscious of its Lilliputian dimensions as to write about the metaphysics of St. Thomas is not to explain what St. Thomas has already explained, not to make clear what St. Thomas has elabo-

rated with such care; it is merely to open the book for those who have not done it for themselves, to indicate, if possible, a new aspect of study for those who have. You cannot paint the lily. An interpreter can never hope to be any more than a channel from the main fountain; he may direct the stream to new fields, but if he leaves traces of himself the water is very likely to be polluted. You can only say: go for yourself; go, ready to admit that perhaps even you can learn a little from St. Thomas; that his mind was perhaps a little more capable of metaphysical thought than the ordinary. Let him speak for himself; and the labor of following the seven-league strides of his giant mind is all too little to exchange for what he has to offer.

REFERENCES

- ¹ S. Thomas d'Aquin, tom. 2, 4th Ed., Alcan, Paris, p. 106.
- ² Sum. Theol., Ia, q. 85, a. 1, c. Cf. also Comm. in De Anim., lib. iii, 1. 8, 717 (the marginal numbers refer to the edition of Pirotta, O. P., Marietti, Turin, 1924): "Illud quod est objectum intellectus nostri non est aliquid extra res sensibiles existens . . . sed aliquid in rebus sensibilibus existens; licet intellectus apprehendat alio modo quidditates rerum, quam sint in rebus sensibilibus. Non enim apprehendit eas cum conditionibus individuantiis, quae eis in rebus sensibilibus adiunguntur. Et hoc sine falsitate intellectus contingere potest. Nihil enim prohibet duorum adinvicem conjunctorum, unum intelligi absque hoc quod intelligatur aliud."
- ³ S. Th., *ibid.*, ad 1.
- ⁴ S. Th., Ia, q. 79, a. 7, c.
- ⁵ S. Th., Ia, q. 84, a. 1, c.
- ⁶ Comm. in De Anim., lib. iii, 1. 6, 659.
- ⁷ De Anim., iii, 428b, 13.
- ⁸ S. Th., q. 84, a. 6, c.
- ⁹ "Forma autem perfecte in materia existens facit esse actu tale." Cont. Gent. ii. 50.
- ¹⁰ "Finitur autem quodammodo et materia per formam, et forma per materiam. Materia quidem per formam, inquantum materia antequam recipiat formam, est in potentia ad multas formas; sed cum recipit unam, terminatur per illam. Forma vero finitur per materiam, inquantum forma in se considerata communis est ad multa; sed per hoc quod recipitur in materia fit forma determinate huius rei. Materia autem perficitur per formam per quam finitur. . . . Forma autem non perficitur per materiam, sed magis per eam ejus amplitudo contrahitur." S. Th., Ia, q. 7, a. 1, c.

"Omnis actus alteri inhaerens terminationem recipit ex eo in

quo est, quia quod est in altero, est in eo per modum recipientis; actus igitur in nullo existens, nullo terminatur." Cont. Gent. i. 43.

- ¹¹ "Materia secundum se neque esse habet, neque cognoscibilis est." S. Th., Ia, q. 15, a. 3, ad 3.
- ¹² "Dicendum quod formae sensibiles, vel a sensibilibus abstractae, non possunt agere in mentem nostram nisi quatenus per lumen intellectus immateriales redduntur, et sic efficiuntur quodammodo homogeneae intellectui possibili in quem agunt." De Veritate, q. 10, a. 6, ad 1.
- ¹³ S. Th., Ia, q. 79, a. 3, c.
- ¹⁴ "Intelligibile autem in actu non est aliquid existens in rerum natura, quantum ad naturam rerum sensibilibus, quae non subsistunt praeter materiam. Et ideo ad intelligendum non sufficeret immaterialitas intellectus possibilis, nisi adesset intellectus agens, qui faceret intelligibilia in actu per modum abstractionis." *Ibid.*, ad 3.
- ¹⁵ S. Th., Ia, q. 79, a. 2, c.
- ¹⁶ S. Th., Ia, q. 79, a. 4, c.
- ¹⁷ S. Th., Ia, q. 79, a. 4, ad 4.
- ¹⁸ Cf. S. Th., Ia, q. 84, a. 7.
- ¹⁹ S. Th., Ia, q. 84, a. 6, c.
- ²⁰ De Veritate, q. 10, a. 6, ad 7.
- ²¹ Comm. in De Anim., lib. ii, 1. 12, 378-380.
- ²² *Ibid.*
- ²³ S. Th., Ia, q. 85, a. 2.
- ²⁴ Comm. in De Anim., lib. iii, 1. 12, 781.
- ²⁵ S. Th., Ia, q. 85, a. 2, c.
- ²⁶ S. Th., Ia, q. 85, a. 1, ad 2. Cf. also passage of De Anim., cited in Note 2.
- ²⁷ S. Th., Ia, q. 86, a. 1, c.
- ²⁸ S. Th., Ia, q. 84, a. 7.
- ²⁹ S. Th., Ia, q. 86, a. 1, c.
- ³⁰ Comm. in De Anim., lib. iii, 1. 8, 713.
- ³¹ S. Th., Ia, q. 84, a. 7, c.
- ³² *Ibid.*
- ³³ "Cum enim mens nostra comparatur ad res sensibiles quae sunt extra animam, invenitur se habere ad eas in duplici habitudine. Uno modo ut actus ad potentiam: inquantum, scilicet, res quae sunt extra animam sunt intelligibiles in potentia. Ipsa vero mens est intelligibilis in actu; et secundum hoc ponitur in ea intellectus agens, qui faciat intelligibilia actu. Alio modo ut potentia ad actum: prout, scilicet, in mente nostra formae rerum determinatarum sunt in potentia tantum, quae in rebus extra animam sunt in actu; et secundum hoc ponitur in anima nostra intellectus possibilis, cujus est recipere formas a sensibilibus abstractas, factas intelligibiles actu per lumen intellectus agentis." De Veritate, q. 10, a. 6, c.

Book Reviews

HISTORY OF MODERN THOUGHT

Michael J. Mahony, S. J., Ph. D., LL. D.

Fordham Univ. Press, 1933, pp. ii, 188, \$2.00

This splendid book, a sequel to the same author's *Cartesianism*, gives an excellent picture of the genesis of modern thought. "Its purpose," in the words of the author, "is to initiate undergraduates who are engaged in the study of Scholastic philosophy into a knowledge of the fundamental principles of those numerous systems that have contributed to the chaos of modern thought from the time of Descartes to the present day." It is a study of modern thought that is not only profitable, but today necessary for an adequate view of Scholasticism, not indeed on account of the intrinsic value of many modern doctrines but rather that the false principles of modern thinkers may be contrasted with the eternal truth of the *philosophia perennis*.

The author treats only four philosophers, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant. In the introductory chapter he finds a natural transition between the idealism of Descartes and the sensism of Locke in the latter's acceptance of the former's principle that the mind has no other immediate object of thought but its own ideas. He then devotes about half of his book to developing the basic principles of Locke's philosophy. After this preparation he traces with incisive clarity how Berkeley evolves his own objective idealism from Locke's denial of substance, how Hume reduces the two previous systems to scepticism, finally, how Kant in an effort to retrieve the fallen fortunes of a bankrupt philosophy falls into a subjective idealism equally sceptical.

There are other features in the book to which we may call attention. Individual philosophers are introduced with biographical sketches which are invaluable for the many facts which

they contain not found in the ordinary history of philosophy. Especially noteworthy is the graphic and sympathetic treatment of Berkeley. The author shows that the national temperament of each of the philosophers is reflected in his works, that the sober minded Locke with English common sense manages to keep in touch with reality despite the inconsistency with his principles, that Berkeley, the amiable Irish dreamer, is led to a spiritualistic idealism, that Hume, the canny Scotchman, impatiently reduces all to scepticism. A keen analysis in his first chapter on Locke demonstrates that Protestantism in its distrust of human reason led inevitably to agnosticism and scepticism. . . a conclusion that Fulton Sheen somewhere expressed so well when he said that the Reformation in taking the mitre off of man took his head off with it.

With its fresh and entertaining style, its fine analysis and synthesis, its splendid characterization, its fund of knowledge, the book should prove stimulating and instructive to all. It is especially suited to give students an acquaintance with Scholastic adversaries who only too often are mere empty names. There are few things to criticize. The title is perhaps somewhat misleading. The book lacks an index and there are a number of typographical mistakes. However, despite such minor defects, we feel that every professor of epistemology and psychology should heartily recommend the book to his students.

NORBERT J. HUETTER.

NEW PSYCHOLOGY AND OLD RELIGION

By the Rev. Edward F. Murphy, S. S. J., Ph. D.

Benziger Brothers, New York, 1933, \$2.50

Let the reader approach this work armed with the warning of Dr. Fulton J. Sheen (Foreword, p. vii), "that this is no protest against the science of sociology, biology, physics or psychology as such, but only their exaggeration in the hands of the non-scientific who know just enough to fumble dangerous levers with their baby fingers." It is, however, a protest against that phase of the New Psychology which winks at the fundamental relationships of the soul, which looks askance at Christian ethics, and ignores God, the sovereign Lord of the universe.

As an example of the author's trend of thought and easy style, we quote the following: "There is nothing in the New Psychology to explain why a maiden, loving life, may turn her back on all the music, and enter a convent; why a Damien sought the living inferno of Molokai and somehow found perfection and joy there; how a David or a Solomon, on the very peak of celestial favor stooped to unclean folly. . . . Life can never be so simple as the behaviorists with their simple theory of gland-stimulus, response and habit, would have it. If it were, all the drama, suspense, glory and pathos of existence would have departed, and men would be even less than a brute—a machine." (p. 5)

Father Murphy's thesis in brief may be stated thus: religion is all and more than the New Psychology can ever hope to offer benighted man. Moreover, genuine psychology is the handmaid of religion, and is never at loggerheads with it, with revelation, or with reason. On the other hand, the New Psychology is a radical revolutionist movement, subversive of much that is tried and true, with little to offer to the individual who is vexed with the cares of life. Such it will continue to be "so long as it insists on snubbing its forbears, exaggerating its own importance, flipping the soul out of consideration as useless, and authority out of ethics as *passé*, reducing life to matter, personality to chemistry, and will to 'conditioning.'"

Some may think that the chapter titles and sub-titles are too spicy, but in my opinion they are spicy tit-bits, thought provokers. The numerous, apt quotations from Holy Writ found throughout the nineteen chapters are indicative of the author's remarkable stock of Biblical lore and his deep love of the past, which was so close to human nature. One may, however, in

one's enthusiasm for a true good, see a bit more beauty and truth in that good than is actually present. Something akin to this manifests itself in the present work, for the impression is left that religion has offered throughout the ages all that psychology claims as its own for the relief of man's abnormal phobias, repressions, inhibitions, etc. Is it not true that for a time heterodox psychology stole a march on religion? And is it not also true that many of the things claimed for religion by the author were merely present in a dormant state before the dawn of the New Psychology? With its appearance religion became cognizant of its own superior wealth of material, and drawing forth from its stock old truths clothed in new garb, offered them to a world nauseated by behavioristic nostrums. Moreover, the New Psychology was not wholly profligate, and I dare say that religion has borrowed much from it.

Aside from this I can offer nothing but praise for this excellent encomium of religion. It cannot but arouse in the reader a deeper respect, a truer love for that marvellous living bond which binds rational creatures to their Creator and Ultimate End. As far as God's intelligence surpasses the knowledge of man, so far does the certainty, beauty, and intrinsic worth of the science of religion excel other sciences. We cannot love it too much. We cannot sufficiently extol it.

LOUIS HANLON.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE MODERN MIND

By the Rev. Bakewell Morrison, S. J., A. M.

Bruce Publ. Co., Milwaukee, 1933, pp. XV, 380

College education takes it for granted that in every branch of learning—languages, history, mathematics, science—there is an immense number of unexplored fields of which the student who has completed his secondary education will still be ignorant. These further studies to be pursued in college will naturally call for a wider background and a decidedly more intense intellectual activity. This obvious fact has always been understood and at least fairly well adhered to in the handling of the secular subjects of the college curriculum. But Fr. Morrison is one of many who are thoroughly convinced that this evident principle has not been properly applied in the case of college religion courses. Hence a vigorous movement has been sponsored especially within the last two or three years whose aim is to make the content and method adopted for college religion courses bear a proportionate relationship to the background and intellectual effort required in the rest of the college curriculum. An example of the practical results of this movement is had in *The Catholic Church and the Modern Mind*.

In this work Fr. Morrison has overcome the inevitable difficulty of writing a text-book which is both logical in its progression and, at the same time, interesting in its presentation. The student who assimilates the material presented in the author's well-planned treatment will find himself equipped with an understanding of all the essentials of philosophy and theology so necessary for the college graduate of today. These essentials, however, are presented in a popular and understandable form without unnecessary philosophical jargon and with a constant application to modern moral problems sufficient to arouse the interest of even the slowest student. The innumerable references to books and recent articles dealing with the various topics discussed suggest a wealth of valuable collateral reading for both the teacher and the student, and are, at the same time, a proof of the author's wide and up-to-date knowledge of all the important religious questions. The book offers many practical aids for the teacher in his preparation and method of presentation. The most useful of these are the analytic summaries of contents given at the end of each chapter which can be utilized for pointed repetitions and quiz classes. Fr. Morrison's book, challenging as it does the intellect of the college student, is a progressive step toward a higher type of religious instruction, and will, therefore, be welcomed by every serious-minded college religion teacher.

PAUL C. REINERT.

